(c) whether progressively automated and interactive systems for booking refills have started; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) to (d) Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies have started On-line customer service in a bid to enhance customers relationships on pilot basis in some cities. Similarly, some of the LPG distributors of these companies are also extending refill booking facility through Interactive Voice Recording System (IVRS) to their customers.

Supply of small size cylinders

†1619. SHRI P.K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have issued directions to all prime oil companies of the country to supply 5 Kg. gas cylinders in order to provide LPG to economically weaker sections of the society;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the names of such States wherein Government propose to introduce this scheme; and

(d) whether Government have issued any guidelines for the supply of these cylinders; if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) to (d) The Government have given 'in-principle' approval to Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies to market 5 Kg LPG cylinders for domestic purpose. The sale of small size cylinders for domestic purpose would be initiated after the development of necessary infrastructure for the purpose.

Exploration of Hydrocarbon at K.G. Basin

1620. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Cairn Energy of UK has made another hydrocarbon discovery in Krishna-Godavari basin in Andhra Pradesh; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, the development plan of the field for early exploration?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) and (b) Cairn Energy India Ltd., a Scottish company, has made a third hydrocarbon discovery in October 2001 in KG-DWN-98/ 2, a New Exploration Licencing Policy (NELP)-I Block, in Krishna Godavari basin, off the coast of Andhra Pradesh. The discoveries need further appraisal in order to establish their commerciality for the development plans to be drawn up.

Lowering of Natural Gas Prices

1621. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH 'SURYA': Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to bring natural gas prices to import parity by April, 2002;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether it is a fact that India does not import natural gas; and

(d) if so, the justification for increasing prices of these gases?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The main reasons are as under:—

(i) To augment the indigenous supply by increasing the indigenous exploration and production and also to import natural gas/liquefied natural gas (LNG) to meet the growing demand for Hydrocarbons and to bridge the wide gap between the demand and supply of natural gas in the country.

(ii) Huge investments needed by Oil India Limited and Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited to maintain the aging fields and also to increase indigenous exploration of gas under high risk.

(iii) To bring about parity with the Joint Venture Companies producing gas who are being paid 100 per cent fuel oil parity price.

(iv) Prices of imported gas/LNG at International rate being substantially higher than the domestic gas.